

DISABLED CITIZENS ALLIANCE FOR INDEPENDENCE

SPRING / SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2020

Serving Crawford, Dent, Iron, Reynolds and Washington Counties



JUST A TOUCH OF THE COUNTRY LIFE

I am hoping that this article finds all of you well and happy with your lives. I want to share with you the reasons I love so much living and working in a small town. I live on a farm just 2 miles from Viburnum, Missouri. This small town has a population of about 650 people. DCAI, the place of my employment, is located in Viburnum. I moved here in October 2012 to become their Executive Director. I am so happy that I made this move!

Viburnum reminds me of Rosendale, Missouri the community where I grew up. As a child, I loved my home town and community. This community is where my grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends lived. I loved having the opportunity to see my family on holidays, weekends, and at all community events. I have so many good memories of this time in my life. My childhood experiences of living in this community are why I am so happy now living here in the eastern part of the Ozarks. I am so thankful that my parents gave me the chance to grow up close to our family and allow the country way of life to be engraved into my heart, mind, and spirit.

I went off to college and then started my career living in the larger cities. It was always my desire to return to the country when I retired. My working career took me to St. Joseph, St. Louis, and St. Charles, all in Missouri. I also lived in Omaha, Nebraska and Topeka and Wichita, Kansas. I enjoyed living in all these cities but knew that they were only a stopping place to give me the means to return to the country life someday. My career ended earlier than I hoped with me losing my job due to company reorganization. You know things all worked out because I found a great job in Viburnum, purchased my land, built my home, and started raising cattle.

My original plan was to move back to Northwest Missouri and buy my farm when I retired. The fact that I lost my job at 56 years old caused me to focus on finding another job. My position with DCAI gave me another job and the opportunity to purchase my farm and start

living in the country years before I had planned. I was a rough time after I lost my job, but it all worked out for me to live my dream. May times our life challenges give us the opportunity to take a new direction with our lives. The outcome of going through a struggle all depends on our focus and determination to make things work out. I strongly encourage each of you to pursue your dreams. I want you to find your joy like I have.

Many of you might say, why don't you move back to Northwest Missouri when you retire from DCAI? Since I built a new home, purchased 96 acres, have over 20 head of cattle, and built an apartment for my sister, it has given me strong roots in this community. My plan now is to work for DCAI for a total of 15 years which would make me 72 years old. I am hopeful to have my loans all paid off by that time. I have 8 more years to work to reach this point in my life. I am so happy and feel so blessed to have been given the opportunity to move to Viburnum and work for DCAI. I love all my family, friends, and Northwest Missouri, but at 72, I am not going to want to move again. I have found my home here in the Ozarks.



If you remember, I purchased an additional 83 acres last August. We have been busy clearing the land and preparing the soil to make grazing pastures for the cattle. It has been a chore since the 83 acres was heavy timber and brush. We should have at least 75 acres that will be seeded and fertilized in April. The ground has been too wet to build perimeter and cross fences this winter. We are hoping to have the 2 miles of fences built by the end of May. There is one nice size pond and we are going to build 2 more this spring. The ponds and pastures will allow us to exercise rotational grazing with our cattle.

Many of us that grew up in rural communities have found ourselves living in larger cities. I know that I did before I got the opportunity to come to Viburnum. I know that many would say you made the choice to move away from your home towns. In my case, I knew that I wanted to have a good career and realized that I needed to prepare financially to be able to purchase a farm and move to the country when I retired. I was fortunate to have everything fall into place for me. I pray if you have the same dream as mine, that you get the opportunity to move into a rural community. We need you so that our way of life will continue for generations to come.

I haven't included pictures for a while in my articles. I am sure that these pictures will bring a smile to your face. This is definitely a little touch of the country life! The first is a picture of my 17 bred cows and heifers along with my bull. The second picture is of the 10 calves that I have. Of the 10, 4 are heifers that I am going to keep for breeding stock and will be bred in late June. I will be selling 5 calves in March and keeping one bull calf. It will be 4 years in May since I purchased my first 5 heifers. I have loved every minute of raising and purchasing my herd. I have worked extremely hard to develop tame and high quality stock. I am sure that you can see that they don't miss many meals!

Some of you may be tired of living in the cities and are looking for a different way of life. I encourage you to research the opportunity to move to a small town community. I know you would love the fresh air and simpler way of life. You may even want to raise some farm animals. I know it is a lot of work, but I love raising cattle. Having livestock and raising them doesn't require a lot of knowledge. You can do what I did. I read and ask a lot of questions after I got my first heifers. Everyone can do this whether you grew up on a farm or in the city. I am sure that there are many farmers that would be happy to answer your questions. Just pick out a rural community and make the move!

I would encourage you to plan a drive in the country soon. Try to picture living out in a small town or owning a small farm as you make this drive. The good thing is that you can always go to a large city if you wanted on a day trip. Where I live, it is only 1 ½ hour trip to St. Louis. I can live the country life every day but have the benefit of going to the city if needed.



In many of the articles I write, I try to give you a touch of what it would be like to live in the country. It is my hope that everyone finds what will give them joy and happiness in their lives. Most that move from the city to the country say they will never go back. I know that is true with me!

Now look at those pictures again. Those are some good looking children! I would love to sell you a few calves to get your herd started. Remember all it takes is to dream about and develop your desires for the country life.

Stay Safe & Be Prepared

DCAI is spending five days out in the communities distributing Pandemic Safety Kits to our consumers, clients, attendants and aids. We will be setting up at 19 different locations to ensure all consumers and clients have a pick up location nearby their home. We have already given out more than 340 Safety Kits.

If you need details on drop off locations, dates and times contact the office.

The kits include:

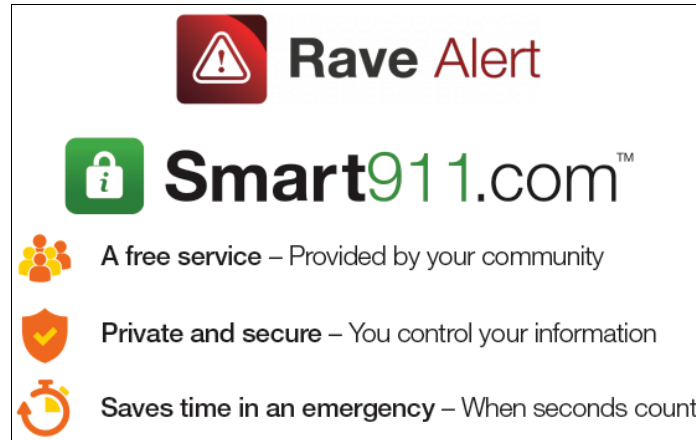
- 2 three ply ear loop masks
- 2 oz bottle of hand sanitizer
- Package of tissues
- 2 antiseptic hand wipes
- 2 pair of vinyl medical gloves
- 1 bar of soap



DCAI would like to send out a **thank you** to all the businesses that let us set up on their property so we could safely distribute the Pandemic Safety Kits.



Crawford County Residents
Now have a Free Alert system available.



The free alert system “**RAVE Smart 911**” will inform Crawford county residents of severe weather warnings in the area, and the current positive cases of COVID-19 in Crawford County.

The **RAVE** service has been used at many schools and universities nation wide. The program is capable of sending a instant alert to 911 if a active intruder enters the facility. The **RAVE** service has been implemented to all Crawford county schools and will shorten emergency services response time for emergency assistance.

Emergency service agencies of Crawford County through the Crawford County Chiefs Association jointly purchased the **RAVE Smart 911** for the residents of Crawford County.

The emergency weather alerts will be provided by the National Weather Service. The COVID-19 information will be provided by the Crawford county Health department.

To receive this service you can **TEXT** the word “Smart911” to 67-283 to receive the link to download the Smart911 phone app. To sign up **ON-LINE** go to **smart911.com** and click **sign up**.

In receiving this service you will be asked to provide your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. Emergency alerts can be received via Text message, E-mail, and phone calls or all three methods if you choose.



Easy ways to reach the Family Support Division

You can contact the FSD from home



Visit MyDSS.mo.gov

Apply, report changes, and check the status of your benefits online 24/7



Call 1-855-FSD-INFO

Please be patient as the call volume may be high at this time.



Email or fax documents

Send completed applications, verification documents, or changes in income or address to **FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov** or fax to 573-526-9400

1. Visit myDSS.mo.gov. Our website allows you to apply, report changes, and check the status of your benefits online 24/7. You can also find more information about all of the services that may be available to you and your family.
2. Call 1-855-FSD-INFO. We will have team members available to help; however, please be patient as the call volume may be high at this time.
3. Send in your documents. We have set up a temporary secure email account and fax number to receive applications, verification documents (like ID, pay stubs, or doctor statements), and changes in circumstance (like income or address changes). Completed applications and any required supporting documents can be sent to FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov or fax to 573-526-9400. Both email and fax will be checked daily so applications can still be processed timely.
4. For questions, call 1-855-FSD-INFO. Do not send questions to the email or fax number.

We appreciate your help in keeping our communities safe. If you have any questions or concerns about COVID-19, please visit the [Department of Health & Senior Services](#) website or call the COVID-19 hotline at 877-435-8411.



Our Mission:

Empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, and productive lives.

Congratulations Savannah!



Savannah Anderson is a 21 year old resident of the Salem area. She graduated from Bunker High School in 2017. Following her graduation from high school, Savannah enrolled in Mineral Area College in Park Hills to further her education with the eventual goal of becoming a nurse. She worked with DCAI Educational

Specialist, Dave Gillam, who provided assistance and support. She said some of her classes were very difficult and required long hours of study and preparation but she never gave up. In May of 2020, Savannah accomplished her goal and earned her Associates Degree in General Studies with a 3.4 grade point average. She plans to further her education and attend nursing school in the fall. We at DCAI are very proud of Savannah for reaching her goal of college graduation and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors.

Congratulations, Savannah!

REMEMBERING WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Everyone is now being forced to evaluate what is really important and what we thought to be important a few weeks ago. COVID 19 has put many into a panic mode while others this has given them some time to reevaluate the importance of family, friends, and how we want to live our lives. This topic is one that I have been thinking about writing about for some time. We are not glad the virus came along and all feel sad that many have and will lose their life. We can only hope that we can learn from this experience and try to focus more on what has true value.

I know that I have struggled for years with the concept of wanting to be an important person while focusing on doing what is important. It is quite clear that doing what is important far outweighs the idea of self-importance to me. Many of us have spent a large portion of our careers trying to get that next promotion that we lost sight of who we are. Even as a young kid, I have always been motivated to accomplish a task and then immediately go look for the next one. In some ways this was a good thing for me and in other ways it has been bad. Again it all depends on having a balanced approach.

I grew up knowing that I was going to go to college and get an education. I knew that having the college degree would give me an opportunity to get a good job. I never thought that having the college education would make me more important than someone that didn't have a degree. A degree is great but it isn't a factor in determining someone's desire to succeed. I am a strong advocate in encouraging employees to continue a lifelong quest of learning. After graduating with a four year degree, I spent another 25 years taking additional educational courses. My efforts helped me to attain my Master and Doctorate in Business Administration.

All throughout my working career, I have been blessed with very talented individuals and employees to work with. Many of them had college degrees while others had worked their way up through hard work and success. I have found that both methods have been good ways for individuals to increase their knowledge and prepare for advancement. I have always appreciated the talented individuals that have helped me accomplish both my personal and career goals.

There are many jobs that require a person to have a specific degree or degrees. We all must meet the job requirements to be considered for a specific job. The point I am trying to make is that just because we have a degree doesn't make us more important than others. The additional education can be a benefit to us individually when performing the specific duties and responsibilities. The more education and experience that a person has will help them in determining what options and methods might help to solve their problems and make decisions.

After finding out that I had an eye disease that would cause me to go blind, I started focusing on taking courses that would help me to be prepared for the future. My hope was to demonstrate that I would be an excellent candidate for promotions even though I wouldn't have eye sight. I knew that by getting the additional education and degrees wouldn't get me the promotions by themselves. I knew that I had to focus on being highly successful in my current job as well. To some extent, I focused so hard on getting to the next level that I lost sight of what truly was important. For 20 years, I applied for additional positions with my company. I never was selected for the new positions. My thought was to just keep taking the additional courses and someday some hiring manager would select me. Well, it never happened. My decision was to pursue another avenue when I was losing my position due to company reorganization.

It was a sad time when I left the company that I had worked for. I had worked 34 years for them. I was saddened by the fact that I was leaving. I was hurt that the company would just let me walk away. The thing that hurt the worst was leaving all the friends and employees that I had worked so closely with. I still think about many of them and wonder at times what they are doing. I have so much respect and appreciation for them. I had worked in five different locations in my career. I was always very sad the day that I would move and leave an office. It was ten times worse knowing that I was leaving the company for good and probably wouldn't see many of them again. I would love to see them again and just tell them thank you.

I hope that all my family and friends realize how important they are to me. The COVID 19 virus has made me think about all of them and how I want everyone to be safe, healthy, and happy. This is a time to stop and reflect on what really matters. Our world today is so filled with drama and fear. The virus has caused so many individuals to panic and lose sight of what is important. So why has filling our homes with toilet paper and food become more important than helping our neighbor or a fellow employee? Fear destroys us where we can't think clearly or focus on how fortunate we all are.

My prayers are for those that have COVID 19 and that everyone that has contracted the disease recover. I am also praying for the individuals that are so panic filled. Is this you? I pray that you can stop focusing on what could happen and start working on being thankful for all the blessings you have in your life. We all have so many good things in our life. We all have family, friends, and co-workers that care about us. Yes, we have been forced to change and stop doing some of the things we love. Is it really so bad to limit our travels to local stores or businesses, work, and home? Those of us that stop and think about it, we have all that we need.

I have asked all the employees at DCAI to leave their fears at the door when they come to work. Some have done a great job of this and others have just let their fear control them. Our role is to focus on helping one another, our consumers, clients, and customers. I will try to do whatever I can to get employees to give up the fear and drama. I pray for them to have peace of mind. I am not fearful of Covid 19 but do worry about those individuals that can't calm down and start realizing that they control their own reactions.

Since many of our activities have been cancelled, it is time to take 30 minutes each day and just think about our lives. Taking the time to slow down and just think will help you calm your fears. Another good method is to get outside and go for a walk, work in your yard, and let the fresh air be a healing factor. Being shut in your homes definitely can cause you to be bored. Consider doing what will allow you to change your fearful thinking. Believe it or not going to work every day is good for you. Do you think that I should expect the employees to come up and thank me for letting them come to work? I am sure some think that I should close our office during this difficult time, however, we are an essential employer.

It is my belief that DCAI must fulfill the promises we have made to our consumers, clients, and customers. Our primary focus is to provide the services that individuals with disabilities need to be able to continue living in their own homes. Every employee must help assure others that we will be here to help them. Our role is to calm the nerves of everyone that we talk with over the phone and our co-workers in the office. It is important that each of us shift our thinking from what if to how we can help others. This method will help everyone whether going to work or staying at home to stop thinking about our fears.

I am hopeful that you all are healthy and are finding useful things to fill your time since we can't go out shopping, out to eat, or take trips. The social distancing hasn't been a bad thing since we can still talk on the phone, text, face time, and many other communication methods without being face to face. I hope you can stop and tell your family and friends how much they mean to you. Showing kindness and concern for others always helps others feel appreciated and in return makes you feel better yourself. I want you to know that I care about you and your family and I care for our consumers, clients and customers.

Remember what is important and take the time to stop and think! We all have so many blessings and things to be thankful for. If you can do this, then, you will come out of this stressful time a far better person. Some of you may need to read this article several times before it will help you to calm your fears. Every person is being asked to make adjustments in their lives and work environment. I know that I am willing to change. Are you?

Some of you might wonder what I am doing to be prepared for the future. This is a very valid question. I am living each and every day to the fullest, reflecting on my blessings, and not thinking about what ifs. I am not giving into the world's fear or panic. I continue to pray for the good health of my family, friends, DCAI employees, consumers, clients, customers and those that are fighting the COVID 19 virus. I want to help everyone come through this time stronger and happier than they were before. I will confront the daily challenges with a clear mind, heart and spirit.

I pray that you stop allowing your fears to consume your time, mind, heart, and spirit. Remember what's important!

Dr. Dennis W. Atkins

March 2020



LOVING MY HOBBY

Consumer Denise Counts has been coloring all her life. She told me she used to use crayons and would color for hours when she was younger. She will still use crayons but also colors with colored pencils. Denise live in a small apartment with her dog Max. Coloring relaxes her and she ends up with special pictures in which she gives to her family and friends. She says she has quite a collection of pictures and keeps them in folders to protect them.

Patty Hedrick -DCAI CDS Case Manager

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again."

.... Thomas Paine



*For Behavioral Health Crisis after hours, call;
1-800-356-5395 for Reynolds County,
1-800-833-3915 for Crawford & Dent Counties
1-800-811-4760 for Iron & Washington Counties.*

MAINTAINING THE FENCES

The last several weeks have been a very trying time for our country. COVID 19 continues to spread and more lives have been lost than from any disease except heart disease in the last week. Social distancing is something that most of us have never had to practice before. From a farmer's perspective, we would call this maintaining our fences. All of us must think about having a fence surrounding us to keep others at least 6 feet away.

Most schools in Missouri have been closed for the last five weeks. Our Governor has decided to close all Missouri schools for the remainder of this year. The counties close to us have issued a stay at home order until May 4. DCAI, where I work, has been classified as an essential employer. We have established a work rotation to keep our offices open Monday through Friday. We want to provide services for all our consumers, clients, and customers but try to keep our employees healthy during this challenging time.

Staying home and maintaining a social distance has been very challenging for most individuals. Our society has grown so accustomed to going where we want on a daily basis. We have been spoiled in being able to go to church, out to eat, and attending social events in our community. Many have had time to stop and think about what is important in their life. I know that I have been giving praise to God for all the blessings that he has given me. He is always willing to help in difficult times.

In July 1979, I was given the news that my life was going to change. I was told that I had Retinitis Pigmentosa which is a hereditary eye disease. The doctors told me that this eye disease would lead to blindness. I was very fortunate that I was able to maintain my life and continue to drive during the daylight hours until November 1998. At 42, I had to make the huge adjustment of having to rely on others to give me a ride to work, take me to the stores, out to eat, and to attend any social events. You might say that I had to face giving up the privilege of going anywhere I wanted to go when I wanted to go there. Most of you can relate to what I experienced since you are facing the stay home order and the social distancing requirement. The huge difference is that, hopefully, your lives should be back to normal soon and my blindness will continue unless the Good Lord would decide to heal me.

In the beginning, when losing my sight, I found myself bored and very sad with the loss of my independence. I have heard many individuals expressing similar feelings with the COVID 19 situation. I am extremely thankful to be able to go to work and have my farm to keep me busy in the evenings and on weekends. Yes, it is a lot of work owning a farm but it has provided me

with a lot of joy. I no longer have to worry about what I am going to do to fill my time or face boredom.

When I decided to purchase my farm and raise cattle, I had 1800 feet of five rail pipe fence built. The pipe fence is very sturdy and is an excellent fence to keep my 23 head of cattle in the pastures. I decided to paint this fence white when it was built in February 2016. Every spring, I have sanded any rust spots and touched up the paint. This year, I have had more time since the stay home order is in place so I decided to give the entire fence two coats of paint. I am including a couple of pictures of me painting the fence. A blind guy must get creative when painting. As you can see, I am using gloves to paint with. The good thing is that I hardly get any paint on me. Only joking!



Believe it or not, I enjoy doing all the physical work and being outdoors working at the farm. There never is any time for me to be bored because there is always something that needs to be done. I am liter-

ally maintaining my fences as you can see in the pictures. Social distancing isn't an issue because other than Lane Eaton, no one else stops by to offer a helping hand. There is sure no one that will want to give me a hug!

My plan is to have all my fences painted by the time the stay at home order is lifted on Monday May 4. I know that most of you are now sad because you would like to join me in painting the fences. I definitely have a few extra pairs of gloves. Ladies, look at it this way, you can help me and get your fingernails painted. I have enough paint to let you paint your toenails at the same time. Now that should be a great offer. So when have you ever gotten an offer to have your finger and toe nails painted free? I can even throw in highlights for your hair.

My prayers are that you come through this crisis with good health. The COVID 19 virus is nothing to mess around with. Be sure to keep your environment clean and wash your hands frequently.



Having social fences or barriers are meant to be for your benefit. Getting outside, on a warm spring day, will help you feel better about things. I know that being outside in the country sure makes me feel good.

I hope you have enjoyed my humor and the pictures of me painting my fence. We all need to smile and laugh more. Maintain your social fences and keep in good health. I care about all of you!

If you get a little sad just think about me down here painting my fence. I am not sure that the paint will all come out of my clothes. I guess I can always donate them to Good Will when I am done. I would be happy to lend them to you for work clothes if you have interest. You can wear them to church if you like. You would certainly be noticed.

Be sure to maintain your social fence for the next few months. I am sure that all of you wish you had fences to paint like I do. I can sell you some calves in the fall.

Stay safe!

Dr. Dennis W. Atkins

April 2020



MASK MAKING

Our Board President Norma Moore

has been sewing tirelessly to make masks for the aides and all staff working for the DCAI Foundation In-Home and all Case Managers and Administrative staff working at DCAI. She's been terribly busy wanting to keep our staff safe during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We are all so appreciative and wanted to send a Big THANK YOU to Norma!! These masks cover well, are comfortable and washable. This is a hard time for all of us. Norma sure is turning lemons in to lemonade by making these masks for us all to have and be safe.

We All Appreciate You for Keeping Us Safe!



DCAI Foundation

ISS & In-Home Services

***** NOW HIRING *****

We are currently seeking applicants in Iron, Dent, Crawford, Washington, Reynolds and St. Francois Counties!

**\$11.25 per hour Monday-Friday
\$12.25 per hour on Weekends & Company Observed
Holidays!**

Qualifications:

- ♦ Must be at least 18 years of age
- ♦ Must have driver's license, vehicle and auto insurance;
- ♦ Must be able to read, write and follow directions; AND
- ♦ Have at least six (6) months paid experience as an agency homemaker OR at least one year paid or un-paid experience caring for children or for sick or aged individuals

Qualified applicants may call or complete an application at the office; visit our web-site at www.dcai.us/DCAIFoundation/Employment, or visit us on Facebook!

DCAI Foundation staff assists persons with disabilities in efforts to ensure individuals have the choice to safely maintain independence in their home and in their communities.

Individualized Support Services will strive to encourage/support Individual's with meaningful choices pertaining to all aspects of daily living; promote socialization and interpersonal relationships, educate and promote health/safety, assist with maintaining healthy relationships with family, and encourage community integration/involvement.

